



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

14 October 1969'

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Director, Far East Division
J-5 (Plans & Policy)
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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SUBJECT

: Comments on the DIA VC/NVA Combat
Order of Battle Analysis

1. We have reviewed the 11 September analysis of VC/NVA combat strength -- the historical trend examination going back to 1965 -- prepared by DIA and forwarded by you. Frankly, this analysis presents a number of problems some of which relate to the data used therein and some of which relate to the way in which the data series are constructed. The figures cited appear to represent a radical departure from previously agreed DIA/CIA estimates of VC/NVA combat strength including the judgments reflected in the current SNIE on Vietnamese Communist capabilities (SNIE 14.3-69, 17 July 1969). We understand that the figures in the DIA memorandum were sent to General Weyand in Paris in response to a request from the Paris delegation for clarification on the question of why Washington seems to use more than one set of OB figures. It appears to us that the 11 September memorandum complicates our current problem even further by adding a new set of different estimates to those already in circulation.

2. We have tried to reconstruct the methodology behind the 11 September memorandum's trend lines and it appears to us that this graph reflects an enemy force level ranging up to about 37,000 less than the agreed estimates. This discrepancy seems to arise particularly because the 11 September memorandum or the calculations on which its graph appear to be based apparently do not include some 20,000 troops that the SNIE shows as part of the enemy threat in and above the DMZ area. Other major differences between the 11 September memo and the current SNIE seem to be the result of a switch from agreed Washington base figures to MACV base figures which the Washington community does not accept. This switch in base lines indicates an apparent DIA-MACV agreement of strength estimates for January 1969, whereas in fact DIA has already published figures showing a January 1969

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strength figure at least 37,000 higher than that reflected in the 11 September memorandum. The differences between this memorandum and what we had thought was the agreed community position would be even greater if DIA had not consistently operated off the low end of the agreed ranges in the current community strength estimates.

3. Since the 11 September memorandum is, in effect, a summary of judgments not accompanied by supporting arguments, we are not able to reconstruct all the methodology that lies behind its trend lines and numerical figures. There are, however, certain clear anomalies in this memo, e.g., DIA's estimate of VC forces at times is shown as being lower than MACV's estimate. Furthermore, the data as presented indicates an increase in the VC force structure during the first four months of 1969, though the community judgment -- including, we had thought, DIA's -- is that overall VC strength declined during this period.

4. I do not wish to be bureaucratically sticky but I do feel strongly that documents such as the 11 September memorandum should be reviewed on a community-wide basis if they are to be anything other than internal departmental working papers and particularly if there is any possibility of their being surfaced publicly or used in forums such as the Paris talks.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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Distribution

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DATE: 14 Oct 69

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TO:

FROM: GACarver, Jr.

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

Per our discussion at the 14 October
Vietnam Committee meeting, attached is
a copy of the memorandum I have sent
to Admiral Epes on the 11 September
order of battle analysis.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

cc:

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DATE: 14Oct69

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TO:

FROM: GACarver, Jr.

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

Per our 13 October conversation with Secretary Laird, attached is the memorandum I am giving to my colleagues on Ambassador Sullivan's Vietnam Committee re the 11 September NVA/VC order of battle analysis.

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

cc:

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